

Remarks

With this paper, claims 2, 10, 20 and 22 have been canceled. Claims 1, 9, 15, and 17 have been amended. Claims 1, 3-9, 11-19, 21 and 23-25 are presented for examination.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-25 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) in view of Tran et al. (US 6,103,316) combined with Dietz et al. (US 5,670,557). Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is requested. The pressure sensitive adhesives disclosed by the Tran reference are not microemulsions. While Tran's "background" section includes a disclosure of emulsion droplets of "less than 1 micrometer" (col. 1, line 52), Tran's disclosed adhesives appear to be macroemulsions in view of his statement that "[t]he homogeneous oil-in-water emulsion will preferably have a paste-like appearance." (Col. 12, lines 13 – 18). While Tran describes the use of thickeners, Tran fails to suggest the possible use of a thickening agent comprising a polymer or copolymer of acrylic acid having a molecular weight between about 200,000 and about 800,000 (e.g., see amended claim 1). The Office Action's reliance on Dietz et al. fails to make up for the deficiencies of the Tran reference. While Dietz describes pressure sensitive adhesives, Dietz again fails to suggest the use of thickening agents comprising a polymer or copolymer of acrylic acid having a molecular weight between about 200,000 and about 800,000. Consequently, even if one skilled in the art could substitute the microemulsions of Dietz into the teachings of Tran, he / she would still lack any motivation to provide a pressure sensitive adhesive formulation having a thickening agent comprising a polymer or copolymer of acrylic acid with a molecular weight between about 200,000 and about 800,000. In the present invention, Applicant has succeeded in identifying a class thickening agents that are capable of working with microemulsions without disrupting their thermodynamic stability. Such a problem was not within the vision of the Tran or Dietz references.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully requests the reconsideration and withdrawal of the obviousness rejections based on the combination of the Tran and Dietz references.

The Office Action also rejected claims 1-25 as obvious under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) in view of Tran et al. (US 6,103,316) combined with Outubuddin (US 5,238,992). Again, Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection, and the reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

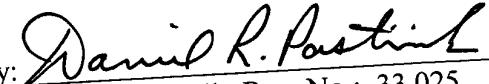
The shortcomings of the Tran reference are discussed above, and those comments are also applicable here. Outubuddin does not make up for the deficiencies of the Tran reference because Outubuddin describes the preparation of solid polymer blends having a controlled porosity. While Outubuddin describes the use of microemulsions, nothing within the teaching of the Outubuddin reference teaches or suggest the desirability of formulating the pressure sensitive adhesive to include a thickening agent comprising a polymer or copolymer of acrylic acid with a molecular weight between about 200,000 and about 800,000.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully requests the reconsideration and withdrawal of the obviousness rejections based on the combination of the Tran and Outubuddin references.

Applicant has endeavored to address all of the issues raised in the recent Office Action of June 20, 2003. With this response, it is believed that the pending claims are in condition for allowance, and the allowance of the application is now solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Sept. 18, 2003  
Date

By:   
Daniel R. Pastirik, Reg. No.: 33,025  
Telephone No.: (651) 737-2685

Office of Intellectual Property Counsel  
3M Innovative Properties Company  
Facsimile No.: 651-736-3833